

RIVER BLYTH PORT HEALTH AUTHORITY.

ANNUAL REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR 1942.



MEMBERS OF THE AUTHORITY.-

Chairman - Alderman F. Rafferty.
Vice-chairman - Alderman H. Donnachie.

Appointed by the Blyth Borough Council.-

The late Alderman W.W.Mather,	The late Councillor T.Stephenson,
Alderman H. Donnachie,	Councillor J.R.Curry,
" F. Rafferty,	" J.W.Heatley,
" R. Walker,	" R.Turnbull.
" A. Walton,	

Appointed by the Bedlingtonshire Urban District Council.-

Councillor C. S. Kidd,
" W. Mather,
" W. C. Ward.

OFFICERS AND STAFF.-

Medical Officer of Health:

J.Stokoe, M.D.,B.Hy.,D.P.H. ... Wellington House,
Blyth.

*Deputy Medical Officer of Health:

W.I.Gordon, M.A.,M.B.,Ch.B. ... Waterloo Road,
Blyth.

Sanitary Inspector and Executive Officer under Rat and Mice (Destruction) Act, 1919:

John Dilks, M.S.I.A.

Rat Catcher:

A. F. Chapman.

Clerk:

J. C. Croft.

Clerk to the Authority:

J.Leigh Turner Esq. ... "Dinsdale"
Marine Terrace,
Blyth.

Telegraphic Address.-
Portelth, Blyth.

* Part-time appointment.

RIVER BLYTH PORT HEALTH AUTHORITY.

Wellington House,
Blyth.

February, 1943.

To the Chairman and Members of the
River Blyth Port Health Authority.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

I beg to present the Annual Report of the Port Medical Officer of Health for the year 1942. The Report is based upon the requirements of the Ministry of Health indicated in a communication received early in January.

STAFF.-

No change among the officers of the Authority took place during the years 1941 or 1942.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.-

No vessel reached Blyth either directly or indirectly from Infected Ports during 1942 and only 4 vessels arrived indirectly from Suspected Ports. These vessels were boarded by your officers but no action was necessary.

TABLE I.

Date. 1942.	From Infected Ports.		From Suspected Ports.		Total.
	Direct.	Indirect.	Direct.	Indirect	
Jan.	-	-	-	-	-
Feb.	-	-	-	1	1
Mar.	-	-	-	-	-
Apr.	-	-	-	1	1
May	-	-	-	1	1
June	-	-	-	-	-
July	-	-	-	-	-
Aug.	-	-	-	-	-
Sept.	-	-	-	-	-
Oct.	-	-	-	-	-
Nov.	-	-	-	1	1
Dec.	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	4	4

Since 1940, when the Authority's Isolation Hospital was closed, cases of infectious diseases removed from ships have been accommodated in the City Hospital for Infectious Diseases at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Transport by Ambulance is provided by arrangement with the Blyth Borough Council.

As required by the Ministry of Health Circular 2513, Memo 252 MED, the Authority accepted a scheme for the treatment of cases of Louse-Borne Typhus Fever occurring on ships reaching the Port. By arrangements with Newcastle City Council, through their Medical Officer of Health, such cases will be collected by and treated at the City's Smallpox Hospital.

The provisions of the Port Sanitary Regulations 1933 continue to be carried out smoothly, very helpful co-operation being obtained from all concerned. Notification of health matters intended for the Authority before the vessels reach the port is received via the G.P.O. from Cullercoats Wireless Receiving Station or Flamborough Head Land Signal Station. Declarations of Health received by the Customs officials are promptly handed over to the Port Authority's officers. Arrangements are in force enabling the rapid following up of contacts disembarking from infected vessels.

Progress has been made in regard to Civil Defence measures available in the Port area. All industrial concerns have trained First Aid Units and Fire-Fighting Parties, while Gas Cleansing Stations have been erected in certain areas. Reciprocal Civil Defence arrangements between the constituent Local Authorities are in force.

Provision has been made for the Salvage of Gas Contaminated Foodstuffs by co-ordinating the Borough Council's Scheme with such facilities as are made available by the Blyth Harbour Commissioners. In short, the Borough's Food Salvage Units will carry out the work assisted by members of the Commissioners' staff who have special experience in boarding vessels and are trained in decontamination methods.

Northumberland County Council's Bacteriological Laboratory at Newburn continues to supply reports as required; for example on the bacteriological examinations of rats, throat swabs etc.

The Port Authority's Inspectors pay special attention to the presence of verminous conditions on board vessels. Crews' quarters are frequently fumigated, while bedding and clothing are either destroyed or disinfected by Blyth Borough Council's Health Department.

Foodstuffs are not imported through this Port.

An Order under the Public Health (Shellfish) Regulations, 1915, is in force prohibiting the distribution for sale for human consumption of Shellfish obtained from layings within the Port area. Copies of the notice are displayed in several parts of the harbour and riverside. Twice during the last few years, attempts to contravene the Order have been discovered, but the practice ceased in each case without resorting to prosecution.

A considerable diminution in the amount of shipping has occurred since the beginning of the war. The peace-time trading between Blyth and Scandinavian Countries, France, Spain and North Africa, has been entirely replaced by Coastal Shipping which, although reduced, is maintained at a steady rate. The application of "black-out measures" and the blocking up of ventilators has a deleterious effect upon the hygiene of crew spaces. Adequate ventilation is further interfered with by the frequent instances of overcrowding due to the need for accommodating extra men in the form of Gunners. Although much is being done to alleviate the discomfort in the crews' living spaces, old vessels present a difficult problem to solve.

Although arrangements for the diagnosis and treatment of Venereal Diseases are insufficient, Northumberland County Council are making determined efforts to improve the situation. It is understood that high

hopes are entertained that a V.D.Clinic will be opened in Blyth during the present year. Meanwhile, the County Council provided post-graduate instruction to two Blyth Medical Practitioners who are now authorised to treat Venereal Diseases at their own consulting rooms. Patients may still obtain treatment at Preston Road Hospital, North Shields, and at The Newcastle General Hospital. Leaflets containing the appropriate information are issued to all vessels reaching the Port.

The Mission to Seamen enlarged their Blyth premises recently and now provide additional accommodation, billiard and reading room for the use of sailors. It would appear, however, that additional entertainment for members of the Merchant Navy, and indeed all Services Units stationed here, would be appreciated. Perhaps those in authority may be able to persuade some organisation such as E.N.S.A. to give performances in this district.

HYGIENE OF CREWS' SPACES.

The Sanitary Inspector reports:-

"Many more vessels have been found verminous than in previous years. 29 were dealt with, crews quarters and galleys have been found affected with Bugs and Cockroaches. Fumigation with Hydrocyanic and Sulphur Dioxide Gas was carried out on the majority of these vessels. Occasionally, where infestation was not very marked, spraying with a suitable insecticide was recommended and this was also complied with. Masters and Chief Officers are requested from time to time to carry an approved insecticide which can be used as occasion arises and thereby prevent accommodation from being over-run with vermin.

Scabies - 14 cases were reported and received appropriate medical treatment. Rooms and forecastles were subject to disinfection. Clothing and bedding were removed to the Borough of Blyth Plant and disinfected. When mattresses were found to be old and unclean they were destroyed."

In all, 91 Sanitary or Structural defects were discovered during the year and all were remedied before the vessels left Port.

SICKNESS AND ACCIDENT.

Illness or accident account for 64 seamen being referred for treatment either at the local Hospital or by private medical practitioners. The principle causes were:-
Infectious or Contagious Diseases -

Scabies	-	14.	
Venereal Disease	-	5.	
Influenza	-	3.	
Diphtheria	-	2.	
?Dysentery	-	1.	25.

Injury and accident	-	15.
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Both cases of Diphtheria were removed to Newcastle City Hospital for Infectious Diseases. Throat swabs of all remaining members of the crews were returned negative to C.Diphtheriae. The man suspected as suffering from

Dysentery was also admitted to the same Hospital and terminal disinfection carried out on his vessel.

A contact from a ship arriving in Glasgow with Smallpox on board reached Blyth during the summer. He was visited daily for three weeks and subsequently released from observation.

Table II classifies by diseases the number of vessels having on arrival or having had during the voyage, infectious diseases on board.

TABLE II.

1941.-

Disease.	No.of cases.	No.of vessels.
Diphtheria.	9	8
Scarlet Fever	1	1
Total	10	9

1942.-

Disease.	No.of cases.	No.of vessels.
Diphtheria	2	2
Dysentery	1	1
Influenza	3	3
Total	6	6

No case of Plague, Cholera, Typhus Fever, Smallpox or Malaria, was brought into the Port.

RAT DESTRUCTION.

I am indebted to the Sanitary Inspector for the following note on rat destruction work:-

"More rats have been destroyed and more vessels showing rat infestation reached the Port than in previous years. While the presence of rats has not been very marked, it has been more wide spread. One is inclined to the view that the destruction of Warehouses and riverside buildings generally, due to enemy action has something to do with the dissemination of the pests.

Prior to the war it was only occasionally that rats were found on Coastal vessels, but in recent months there has been more signs of infestation.

Seven vessels have been fumigated with Sulphur Dioxide and three with Hydrogen Cyanide Gas.

Trapping and Poisoning was carried out on sixteen vessels. These methods are still indispensable, not only for rat destruction, but to facilitate an assessment of the extent of infestation. By the skilful use of traps, rats can soon be recovered for examination purposes. Specimens are sent regularly to the County Laboratory, Newburn-on-Tyne. Regarding the repression of rats, the ideal, of course, is to make or build ships as rat proof as possible and thereby reduce harbourage to a minimum. Modern vessels are a great improvement in this connection."

During the year, 144 dead rats were recovered from vessels and 14 from Docks, Quays, Wharves and Warehouses. Altogether 930 poison baits were laid in Docks, Quays, etc. In no instance, including 5 reported upon bacteriologically, was evidence of plague infection found among the dead rats.

I wish to record my sincere appreciation to members of the Authority's staff for their continued willing co-operation and especially to the Sanitary Inspector for his assistance in preparing this report.

I am, Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,

J. STOKOE.

Port Medical Officer of Health.